

testimony of their painful experiences, because of lack of opportunity or capability" (p. 18).

One of the most important themes in *O Silencio Redimido*, and one that runs through all its pages, is the idea of silence. The title of the novel, "redeemed silence," is in itself significant. Alfredo Guerra's silence is redeemed by revealing the painful dilemma of idealistic youths captured by a repressive police force that compels them to choose between instant death and a life of degradation. Carlos's silence is redeemed by showing how an innocent man can be deprived capriciously of his freedom and basic human dignity during the lawless days of a civil war. The silence of many guiltless victims who suffer and die through senseless violence is redeemed in Carlos's account of their individual tragedies. Finally, in a symbolic manner, the collective sin brought forth by the war is redeemed by valiantly exposing its nefarious character.

The novel's structure also contributes effectively to presenting the novelist's vision. Chronology and reader enlightenment appear inversely related in Santiago's book. The reader arrives at a more complete understanding of the protagonist's personality and the way in which his destiny was forged by reading last the account of the first part of his life. The second part of the manuscript, although portraying events that precede those described in the first, narrates the most interesting and dramatic episodes in Carlos's life. The progressive increase in dramatic interest goes hand in hand with the progressive enlightenment of the reader.

*O Silencio Redimido* represents a notable achievement in the contemporary Galician novel as well as a new vision of the Spanish Civil War. Its protagonists are history's unsung victims, the unimportant, unheroic sacrificial lambs in a time of violent upheaval of the common rules of legal and civilized behavior. Ultimately, *O Silencio Redimido* is a quiet but dignified warning to avoid the depths of degradation, injustice, and cruelty brought forth by civil war.

## A Failure to Love: A Note on F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Rich Boy"

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It has been argued that "In *The Great Gatsby*, as in 'The Rich Boy' written immediately after, Fitzgerald clung stubbornly to his point of view, the mature view of a disinterested observer gifted with an acute sense of the 'fundamental decencies'."<sup>1</sup> But on this point there are important differences between the novel and the short story. The unnamed narrator in "The Rich Boy" (1926) is far less involved with Anson Hunter than Nick Carraway is with Gatsby, and also less critical and more indulgent towards the hero. The distance between author and narrator is greater in the story than in the novel, so that there is more room for the author's point of view than in the novel, where Nick's perspective is dominant.

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<sup>1</sup>James E. Miller, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: His Art and His Technique* (New York: New York University Press, 1964), p. 118.

In "The Rich Boy" Fitzgerald gives us an unsparing portrait of the essential shallowness of a certain type of American upper-class man, the millionaire Anson Hunter. He is a second generation rich boy who lacks some of the more important virtues of his father, the Gilded Age entrepreneur who combined his accumulation of wealth with a Puritan morality which, however narrowminded, did involve a sense of responsibility to something greater than the individual self.

The story is about the failure of love on Anson's part, his inability to respond to the genuine devotion that his fiancée Paula Legendre gives him. His selfish and undeveloped personality is to blame, and Fitzgerald persistently underlines Anson's easy self-confidence and suggests, with subtle irony, that it is out of proportion to any actual quality or accomplishment in the man. Though charming and affable, he is self-indulgent, drinks too much, and seems to have no intellectual or artistic interests whatever. He becomes a successful businessman, but his personality develops and matures little, if at all. This is the basic criticism of his hero that the author conveys, indirectly, by having his anonymous narrator observe Anson's life and comment on it in an affectionate as well as detached manner. The ironic and even judgmental view of Anson is thus expressed by the implicit author rather than the narrator.

At the same time, Anson Hunter is also seen as a victim of his own circumstances, even though he was born into a rich family. To be rich means to run the risk of being damaged, though in a different and less drastic way than is the case among the poor. Even as a child Anson is made to feel the difference between himself and the other children in the village where the family has a summer house: "Anson's first sense of his superiority came to him when he realized the half-grudging American deference that was paid to him in the Connecticut village. The parents of the boys he played with always inquired after his father and mother, and were vaguely excited when their own children were asked to the Hunter's house. He accepted this as the natural state of things, and a sort of impatience with all groups of which he was not the centre—in money, in position, in authority—remained with him for the rest of his life. He disdained to struggle with other boys for precedence—he expected it to be given him freely, and when it wasn't he withdrew into his family."<sup>2</sup> The result of this sense of superiority is to impair Anson's growth as a complete human being. To speak of victimization may seem out of place with regard to Anson Hunter, rich and popular as he is, but his stunted development is to be deplored because he is endowed with the potential for something greater and better than what he finally settles for. His siblings are clearly more ordinary than himself, and he is equipped with leadership qualities and perhaps also an ability to love a woman which never gets much chance to flourish.

The passage about the rich who are "different from you and me" (p. 139) provides certain clues concerning the reasons for Anson's failure to develop his relationship to Paula: "They possess and enjoy, and it does something to them, makes them soft where we are hard, and cynical where we are trustful, in a way that, unless you were born rich, it is very difficult to understand" (p. 139). Taught to value wealth and family dynasties above everything else, the rich have accustomed themselves to arranged marriages and have become cynical and hard about human affection and love, regarding them as commodities of secondary importance. One of the ironic effects of the story is to show the perils of this attitude as we watch the decline of Anson into an isolated and even pathetic figure. But others are ready to support Anson in his false self-image because they worship his background, the enchanted realm of the rich. In America everyone cooperates in upholding this

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<sup>2</sup>F. Scott Fitzgerald, *"The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" and Other Stories* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1980), p. 141. All quotations are from this edition.

myth and thus shielding people like Anson from the kind of criticism which he needs.

"The Rich Boy" is primarily about the failure of personal relations, and the essence of this failure is the abortive romance between Paula and Anson. The sensitive description of their relationship shows the superior awareness of the woman in a manner which is in close accordance with some current feminist thought and its claim that women have an intuitive understanding of the meaning of love which many men lack. Paula is rich, like Anson, yet somehow she has preserved a capacity for love which he never really understands or is capable of reacting to on an equal basis. He realizes that "on his side much was insincere" (p. 143) in their relationship, and he is even said to despise the "emotional simplicity" (p. 143) of her feelings for him. At the same time, and in spite of himself, he is drawn to her sincerity and the "enormous seriousness" (p. 143) of what is called their "dialogue" (p. 143).

With a part of himself, Anson is aware of what Paula has to offer him and what is at stake, but he values neither her nor his own feelings highly enough to grant love the central place it might have occupied in their lives. In the course of their courtship, he squanders his own emotional potential and rejects, without understanding it, Paula's love for him. The relation to her is the only thing that could have "saved" Anson from his superficiality and made it possible to develop other and more deeply human qualities in him, but the arrogance behind his relaxed self-confidence precludes any such change. Failing to see any need for adjustment in himself, he makes real interaction and communication with Paula impossible, and she is not the sort of person who is willing to submit her will and wishes totally to those of a future husband. Thus, after their first argument, when Anson has been drunk at a dinner party, he apologizes to Paula and her mother but shows no real remorse and makes no promises. Consequently, as it is stated, "the psychological moment had passed forever" (p. 148). In other words, the chances of establishing a genuine dialogue, a process of give and take, are lost.

Anson and Paula then go their separate ways, he to become an established businessman and popular bachelor, she to get married and remarried and have three children. They meet again after a lapse of several years, and this encounter demonstrates that Anson still does not fathom what has happened to either of them. Paula makes it clear that her love for him had stayed with her for a long time in spite of her other men. She tells Anson, woundingly but with understandable bitterness, that she now has found love for the first time, with her second husband, but then she dies in the attempt to bring this man's child into the world. Thus her short life comes to a tragic end at least partly due to Anson Hunter's failure to live up to her sincere expectations.

Their final dialogue is revealing:

"I was infatuated with you, Anson—you could make me do anything you liked. But we wouldn't have been happy. I'm not smart enough for you. I don't like things to be complicated like you do." She paused. "You'll never settle down," she said.

The phrase struck at him from behind—it was an accusation that of all accusations he had never merited.

"I could settle down if women were different," he said, "If I didn't understand so much about them, if women didn't spoil you for other women, if they had only a little pride. If I could go to sleep for a while and wake up into a home that was really mine—why, that's what I'm made for, Paula, that's what women have seen in me and liked in me. It's only that I can't get through the preliminaries any more." (p. 179)

Because of Anson's immaturity, their love could not develop beyond the stage of infatuation, although Paula had been aware of the power of her emotions and had been willing to do anything for him. Anson likes the idea of marriage and claims that he is made for the role of husband and head of the home, but he is not ready to make the emotional effort that is required, or, as he puts it, get on with the preliminaries. Without seeming to be aware of it, he reveals his spiritual laziness in his wish that he might go to sleep and wake up in a home of his own without having to work for it in any sense. This laziness is Anson Hunter's great misfortune, and though he is never made to understand himself clearly, his underlying feelings of despair and loss emerge on two occasions. When Paula becomes engaged to her first husband, he breaks down and cries, even in public, several times, and after their last meeting he suffers from "depression" (p. 180) and "intense nervousness" (p. 180) and goes to Europe on a three months' vacation.

When Paula dies, his depression seems to lift as he sets out on his voyage, suggesting that her ceasing to function as a reminder to him of his weakness makes him capable of forgetting it and resuming his old role as a charming but superficial ladies' man. On the ship he returns to this role and becomes involved with a girl wearing a red tam-o-shanter. He likes and needs women, but only to "spend their brightest, freshest, rarest hours to nurse and protect that superiority he cherished in his heart" (p. 182). Anson remains a child, emotionally speaking, attractive but unreliable, and ultimately egocentric in a manner which probably will spoil his chances of achieving the happy marriage he seems to want. The suggestion is that he will always need new, admiring women to affirm the sense of superiority that has become the essence of his identity. Through the figure of Anson Hunter, Fitzgerald has delivered a damaging blow against the American rich and their frequently inflated image of themselves as the leaders of their nation.